56. Reform of the present educational system.

REV. J. E. KESARI (*Member, Nominated*) prefaced his representation by pointing out the change in the method and outlook of educationists during recent years. Child psychology had developed into an important science and was being increasingly applied to education, every effort being made to remove unnecessary difficulties from the path of the young learner.

John Adams, the distinguished educationalist, said that the teacher who would teach John Latin must know John as well as Latin. This oft-quoted aphorism might be said to define the modern tendency in education. To know John was today the great problem of education, but one could not believe that the Travancore Education Department had realized the gravity of it. In their choice of teachers the department still went by university degrees and academic qualifications. Other qualities of at least equal importance were not insisted upon. This was deplorable.

The havoc played by unsuitable men in the teaching profession was greater than was generally supposed. Mental growth was paralysed, personality warped, and expansion and self-expression fettered and curbed to a greater degree by an unsuitable teacher than by any other known combination of forces or circumstances. Headmasters and teachers must be asked to look out for such teachers and to report them to the Director of Public Instruction, who should forthwith arrange for their transfer to some other department in the Government where they could be more useful. A teacher who continued to be unpopular with students in spite of repeated transfers had something very wrong about him and must be dealt with at once. The undergraduate training course must again be extended to two years. Individuals not to be desired as teachers could then be picked out easily and eliminated and a more substantial training could also be given. No teacher should be confirmed in his place till he had been through the training course.

On the other hand greater facilities should be given to the teacher for knowing his pupils. The strength of each class must be reduced to half or even one third the present number. One could know what this would amount to. But it was certainly better to give real education to a small number than to turn out multitudes of poorly trained individuals. Travancore could at present boast more of the quantity of education it gave than of its quality.

Another opportunity for the teacher to get into close touch with his pupils might be created by the introduction of a new period into the school time-table for the teacher to spend with his students. There must be at least two such periods every week. The teacher must be free to make use of them according to his discretion. He might take his children out to a shady place and play a game with them. Or he might tell them a story. Or he might leave them to themselves and watch them while he called one or two to his side and held friendly conversation with them. The teacher's purpose all the time was to

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draw his pupils out, to study their peculiarities and to find out their strong and weak points with a view to utilizing the knowledge so gained to the advantage of the individual. Teachers must also be compelled to take their pupils out on holidays for picnics or excursion parties very frequently as part of the school scheme. A teacher should know each of his children intimately, and must be constantly on the alert to correct individual defects and to encourage and bring out desirable characteristics.

Another point that had to be emphaised was that our education was non-moral just as it was non-religious. Our educational system needed re-organization along a definite moral basis.

A high standard of morality must be insisted upon in every teacher. Honesty and sobriety, industry and purity of life must be impressed upon the children more by example than by precept. Moral lapses in teachers must be taken serious notice of. This point must also be steadily kept in view in the selection of text books which must contain nothing unhealthy. Stories of war, of fighting and of killing must be studiously avoided. Love stories must be ruled out altogether in books for elementary classes and all forms lower than the sixth.

In every school and college a period in the morning preferably the first must be devoted to religious instruction. The Bible, the Koran and the sacred books of the Hindu religion must be taught. No one could deny the practical difficulties of the scheme. They might all be surmounted. Instruction must be given in the subject matter of the Holy Books and their interpretation and the broad principles and teaching of each religion must be freely dealt with in the class room, sectarianism being avoided as far as possible. The *munshies* and *pandits* of the various languages would make excellent religious instructors. More teachers must be appointed or trained as needed till all the different religious bodies and sects were satisfied. But on the whole the ideal must be to so broaden the outlook and sympathies as to make sectarianism unimportant. Allied or different sects must be encouraged to take instruction together, the purpose in so doing not being merely economic. The different sects and individuals of different religious persuasions might thereby be brought to tolerate, respect and appreciate each other's point of view. Contempt or unfriendly criticism of the religious beliefs of others must be severely condemned.

In this connection it might be pointed out that much greater importance should be given to vernacular education and to the study of the great Indian languages both ancient and modern. The Madras University had opened the way for this, but we were slow to respond. The abolition of the Sanskrit chair in our college and the increasing neglect of Tamil in Travancore were facts that pointed to a certain tendency in our education which one should not hesitate to call retrograde.

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Necessary steps should be taken to secure the benefits of the latest and best methods of teaching for our children.

A few of of our ablest young teachers already employed in the educational service might be sent by the Government to Eûrope and America to study one of these moden methods best suited to Travancore and to introduce them into our schools.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Rev. Mr. Kesari, I am sure everybody here has listened with rapt attention and considerable interest to the carefully thought out essay on education which you have been good enough to read to us. Taking up first the last point you mentioned, that a large number of young men and women be sent from here to Europe and America to study methods of education pursued there, it seems to me to be hardly of real use to Travancore according to its present educational needs. Conditions of life here are different, the mentality of the people is often different, and the requirements of education in this country are in many ways divergent from those obtaining in Europe and America at the present moment.

There is one matter which you mentioned and that is, the teachers at present available are not properly equipped either with a knowledge of psychology or of pedagogy. With reference to this, I will draw your attention to the fact that there is something over half million young persons undergoing instruction in Travancore at the present day. This number is so great and education is so rapidly spreading in the State already that the supply of qualified teachers has not been able to keep pace with the demand. Every attempt is being made to evolve means for scientifically training our teachers as soon as this can be carried out. It was only a few weeks ago th at the Director of Public Instruction and I discussed for some hours the feasibility of rapidly training teachers either already in the service or who may be cal.ed upon to join the educational activities of the State.

Another matter you dwelt upon with considerable vehemence was about the lack of religious instruction in the schools. That is a matter I have thought of for the last two years with increasing anxiety. Whatever a man's religion, whatever particular faith he follows or practises, it is necessary that religion must enter into the daily life of every man, woman and child in the country. And there is no more appropriate time for the inculcation of the principles of religion than early youth. Whether it will be possible for Government to introduce forms of religious instruction in the schools of Travancore where there are so many religions and sects is a problem, the solution of which is almost beyond one's grasp, I hope not entirely beyond one's grasp, and there is no reason at all why Travancore, because of her peculiar circumstances, should not set all India a lead in this matter too. Whether it will be possible within the next few years to meet satisfactorily what I consider the most desirable need, it is impossible for me to say at present. But I have not the slightest doubt this will receive careful consideration at the next conference of headmasters.

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On the supply of text books—you have heard me touch upon that matter twice before you spoke. So you realise that that matter will engage the serious attention of the educational authorities in the State.

57. Eductional reforms.

MR. K. M. PHILIPOSE (*Member, Nominated*) said that compared with other countries, Travancore was having a system of education which was to a large extent out of date. Mysore, Baroda and other Indian States were making drastic changes in their educational policy; but Travancore was holding fast to her old obsolete system. To mention only two of the modern developments in educational policy, every civilised country was giving importance to the study of the vernacular and to the giving of practical training in schools. Both these features were conspicuous by their absence in the schools in Travancore.

There was an old circular laying down that in English schools all subjects except the English language should be taught in Malayalam, but that circular remained a dead letter to this day. In future, classes i to iv might be treated as primary classes, while in classes v to vii Malayalam might be given the foremost place and English might be taught only as a second language. In this view English and vernacular schools need not be separately maintained as at present. The appointments of the Inspector of English Schools and the Assistant Inspectors of English Schools could then be abolished. The Director of Public Instruction could himself inspect the High Schools. As regards the remaining schools, there should be a Chief Inspector with a few Assistants divided into two grades. The Assistant Inspectors in charge of primary schools should be given a pay of Rs. 50-75 and those in charge of middle schools should be given a pay of Rs. 75-150. There should be only three officers in the latter grade. The Assistant Inspectors of primary schools should each have under him not less than one hundred and fifty schools.

In order to promote the vernacular, another step should also be taken. All official correspondence except that with the Huzur should be required to be carried on in Malayalam. This rule should be rigorously enforced.

The expenditure on the Education Department had of late reached prodigious proportions. It was high time to draw a line in this matter. The only way to do this was to hand over all Sirkar primary schools to private agencies. In case a sufficient number of managers could not be secured, taluk boards should be appointed in each taluk and pakuthi boards in each pakuthi, and the schools should be transferred to their control.

Government might consider the following measures for reducing the outlay on primary schools:—

(1) All Government primary schools should be transferred to private management, wherever efficient and trustworthy persons were

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